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SPC. MEDINA HONORED AT MEMORIAL

By Christopher Selmek
19th PAD

"Although I did not know this young man, I feel particularly close to him," said Lt. Col. George Geczy, III, commander, 1st Battalion, 41st Infantry. "He, like my father, immigrated to this country with his family, and like Irving, chose to serve in our Army while the nation was at war."

"My father, throughout my childhood, would genuinely be amazed and confused by how Americans took for granted our basic liberties, our way of life and opportunities," he continued. "He rarely punished his four boys, but if we did not stop and stand still for retreat, or know the words to the pledge of allegiance or Star Spangled Banner, it would greatly upset him. To him, and I understand now, they were indicators that we, his own children born of this land, were taking for granted this wonderful idea. The idea that freedom can lead to such good fortune to the common man and woman, an idea so simple that families would risk everything they had just to live in a land where people fought and pursued ideas like 'all men and women are created equal, they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'"

Spc. Irving Medina, formerly of Service Battery, 4th Battalion, 1st Field Artillery, was killed in action in Iraq on Nov 14. A memorial service was held Nov. 20 at Morris Hill Chapel, where various soldiers and civilians gathered in his memory and to honor his example.

"Irving Medina was and is a child of God," said Chap. (Lt. Col.) Daniel Jenks. "Here and now we are all God's children. We come together in grief, acknowledging our human loss; may God grant us grace that in pain we may find comfort, in sorrow hope and in death resurrection."

Medina was born in Mexico City, Mexico, on July 14, 1981, according to Capt. Casey Maxfield, commander, Service Battery, 4-1 FA. He enlisted in the Army on Aug. 23, 2001. Throughout his active military service, he constantly displayed mental toughness, leadership and strict adherence to military professionalism. Fort Riley was Medina's first

duty assignment and he left an indelible mark on all the soldiers of Service Battery, 4-1 FA Regiment.

After graduating Advanced Individual Training in December of 2001, Medina was assigned to Service Battery, 4-1 FA as an ammunition handler. He deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in April of 2003. His awards include the Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal and the Army Service Ribbon.

"Spc. Medina will always be remembered for his love and dedication to the United States Army and to the 4th Battalion, 1st Field Artillery," said Maxfield. "With a twin brother, Ivan, serving at Fort Stewart, and a sister, Jenny, serving in Florida, Essy came from a family dedicated to serving the United States through military service. Spc. Medina's commitment to helping Iraqi children, love for soccer and genuine concern for his fellow soldiers made a positive and long-lasting impression on all he came into contact with. He will be sorely missed by all those associated with the Gunner Family."

"I can only imagine what Irving and Ivan, twin brothers serving in Iraq, one a cannon crew member and ammunition handler with the first armored division, the other as a sapper soldier with the 3rd Infantry Division, talked about when they were able to briefly meet in Baghdad," wondered Geczy. "I know the prevailing comment among soldiers in my outfit was 'you do not understand how important freedom and liberty are until you live among people without it'. These two brothers probably said, after hearing these comments from their fellow soldiers, 'they finally get it, what it means to be born American, what it means to be in the land of the free and the home of the brave'."

Throughout the ceremony, Medina was hailed as a true example of someone who appreciates the American way of life, particularly for having been born without it.

"For Irving's parents, his mother, Anna, and his father, Jorge, an American family, they have lost their son, our brother to this war," said Geczy. "They have given, and are giving so much in the pursuit of this democratic idea. We thank you both for your sacrifice and your constant reminder of why being an American is such a wonderful opportunity not to be wasted. Opportunities that need to be protected and preserved."

"We have come together today to say 'thank you, Irving, for your service', to pay respect to your commitment to your fellow soldiers in harms way," he continued. "To your twin brother, Ivan, and your sister, Jenny, to your mom and your dad, we want you to know that we will carry on the fight. We will, as you did, stand strong as soldiers against those who want to threaten the idea of free people in the world and in America, and the opportunity this idea gives to the common person."

Several soldiers were on hand who knew Medina personally while he was alive, including Spc. Kenyatta Campbell, Service Battalion, 4-1 FA, who was with Medina in Iraq and flew in for one day to attend the service.

"I served with him in basic training, and I'm very proud that my friendship with him goes so far back," said Campbell. "I'm just glad that I knew him."

"He was a good person, he loved people," Campbell continued. "He was very proud of what he was doing, he struck me as a young man who never really got a chance to grow up, but he believed in what he was fighting for."

Campbell said he believes that everybody over there is trying their best to support each other, and to stay positive despite the negativity that often comes around them.

“He was my partner over there,” said Spc. David Marin, another member of Medina’s platoon allowed to attend the service. “If not for him, I might have died over there, I’m sure of it. You could never get his spirits down, he was always smiling about something.”

Jenks’ last words before the final roll call and playing of taps struck a chord among the congregation, moving some to tears while others simply stood and remembered.

“Most of us did not join the Army because we wanted to become killers,” said Jenks in his final speech.

“We joined the Army out of love, for our freedom, out of love for our country and out of love for the way of life that we all enjoy. Spc. Medina died defending that freedom; and we can all be thankful for the honor of having known him,” he said..

“We are grateful, Irving, for your service,” he finished. “God bless the Medina’s, our Gunner families and Soldiers, God bless America.”

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